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Promotion and protection of human rights

Letter dated 11 December 2008 from the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit herewith the text of the address given by Mr. D. A. Medvedev, President of the Russian Federation, to participants attending the plenary meeting of the United Nations General Assembly held on 10 December 2008 to commemorate the sixtieth anniversary of the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would have this address issued and circulated as a document of the sixty-third session of the General Assembly under agenda item 64, entitled "Promotion and protection of human rights".

(*Signed*) V. **Churkin**

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Annex to the letter dated 11 December 2008 from the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Address to participants attending the special meeting of the United Nations General Assembly held to commemorate the sixtieth anniversary of the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights

It is a pleasure for me to address participants of the special meeting of the United Nations General Assembly held to commemorate the sixtieth anniversary of the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

We are here today to commemorate a momentous landmark in history. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights has had a tremendous impact on the formation of the modern world order and international law, and on the lives of millions of people around the world. Its main principles have been further developed in international treaties and in regional and national legal systems.

Unfortunately, the provisions of the Declaration are not being fully implemented by all countries. The enjoyment of real freedoms and rights is extremely unequal. Moreover, fundamental rights — respect for life, freedom, dignity and justice — are being devalued. Human rights are often used as a means of exerting political pressure and achieving opportunistic goals. The reversal of these negative trends requires the goodwill and hard work of all interested parties: States, international organizations and civil society. The overall objective is to build, through respect for human rights, a fairer world order which takes into account the diversity of the modern world and the traditional values of humanity.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights was drawn up and adopted immediately after the Second World War. The Declaration was humanity's response to the pain and suffering caused by Nazism and, of course, was motivated by the desire to prevent such a nightmare from reoccurring. In that connection, modern manifestations of racism and xenophobia and attempts to revive Nazism are particularly alarming. All of us must stand together to counter these challenges.

In order to implement the provisions of the Declaration, it is important to consistently strengthen measures for the promotion and protection of human rights. States themselves must be responsible for their implementation, with the United Nations playing a coordinating role. The necessary institutional and legal framework has been established for that purpose: the United Nations Human Rights Council, which has an effective monitoring tool at its disposal in the form of the universal periodic review mechanism. We expect the Council's work to be fruitful and to meet the expectations of the international community.

The universal value of human rights and the need for universal respect of human rights have been conclusively proved over the years. Without this, the harmonious development of the modern world is impossible. The world of tomorrow

depends on us and on our actions today. I am convinced that it is within our power to ensure that human rights are enjoyed by everyone, and that we can make the world a better and a fairer place in which to live.

I extend to all participants in this meeting my best wishes for success in their work.

(*Signed*) D. **Medvedev**